WHITE BLUFF

757 824 "Duh wite root," pointing to a wild shrub, "dey use fuh stomach troubles. Buttuh root an palmettuh root an May apple, yuh bile tuhgedduh wid a quawt uh watuh till it simmuh down tuh haf uh pint, den yuh add some cawn wisky. Dat a fambly tonic tuh buil yuh up."

777 [784] Sophie went on to tell us something about the beliefs prevailing in the neighborhood. "Ef some relative is sick, yuh dohn nebuh deah tuh sew on a gahment wut yuh is weahin cuz dat put a spell on duh sick un an dey mos liable tuh die.[49] Deah's anudduh ting too. Yuh sho bettuh not steal tings frum a grabe.[64] I sho know I wouldn. Deah's jis a lot uh udduh tings bout bad luck too. One sho sign is dat [827] ef a pusson sneeze wile dey's eatin long, dat is, dey hab food in dey mout, den dey got tuh put it out lessn dey hab bad [825] luck.[52] Anudduh sign is duh hootin ub a owl." [44]

754 A strange look of doubt and amusement came into Sophie's eyes at the mention of conjuring. She smiled and slowly shook her head.

"I heahd ub a few cases weah dey say one uh duh neighbuhs cunjuh anudduh,[15] but fuh duh mos paht dey all gits long all right. Das cuz we's all Christians an dohn put no faith much in dem kine uh tings. Dey say dat a powuhful cha!'m kin be made frum grabeyahd dut[9] fuh cunjuhin puhpo..s, but duh pusson dat git duh dut mus put some pennies on duh grabe, else he hab trouble hissef. Nebuh let a enemy git any ub yuh haiah wut bin cut off aw yuh nail clippins. Ef he git deze he kin make sumpm dat will cause [826] lot uh trouble.[10] I kin tell yuh sumpm else bout duh haiah [825] too. Ef a bud gits duh haiah, yuh'll hab a headache soon.

754 759 "Now Uncle John Bowen on St. Catherines he wuz a root man an one time a man come tuh him tuh git somebody fix. Uncle John he wuz fixin tings tuh linguh um, an duh man sit on duh cheah weah he hab duh cunjuh tings an Uncle John he git so mad he git right up an fix duh cunjuh right now so dat man wut awduh duh fixin die hesef. He fix lot

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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her master, Thomas Dabney, who was born in 1798. Grannie had been given to him by his mother with the words: "You can trust her in everything." When he went to Mississippi she went along with his other slaves, but apparently the journey was too hard, and Grannie died soon after their arrival. "The master himself led the funeral procession, and all his children followed the coffin as mourners. He ordered out the whole plantation, every one who could walk, and every man, woman, and child carried a torch. The sound of the funeral hymn and the blazing of the many torches, as we wound down the road to the dark shades of the burying-ground, made a painful impression on me as a child and caused many a secret tear." In her *Journal* Fanny Kemble describes another night funeral on Butler's Island, to which she reacted in a similar manner—except that she did not shed her tears in private.

In describing an African burial, Mungo Park mentions that the body is dressed in white cotton, wrapped in a mat, and then "carried to the grave in the dusk of the evening, by the relations." From this I am led to believe that the custom may have originated in Africa. Further evidence to support such a view is furnished by Monroe M. Work, who says, in an article in the *Southern Workman* (1907), that it was an old Hamarian practice to bury the dead in the dark. It may be that our Negroes carried out some such traditional observance when they threw their pine torches beside the grave and went back without them. We know the belief in spirits is strong, and it is possible that in this way the spirit of the dead man was prevented from following the living to their homes. Be that as it may, the pine torches were never removed, and the nearest I have come to an explanation of why they were left was given me by Katie Brown: They belonged to the dead. You must not take away a thing that is theirs. If, at the burial, a button falls to the ground from your dress, you must not pick it up. Bad luck follows you if you do.[28]

A nephew of Katie's gave me an instance of what happened to a Sapelo colored man he knows, who helped clean up the graveyard. After he had put the brush in piles to burn, he thriftily changed his mind and brought in his ox and cart to carry it away. Instead, he had to back his "team" into the fence and leave in a hurry when attacked by an immense dog—as big as a yearling calf—that had never before been

[28] *If you start to do something for the dead—whatever it is—you must carry it through. Laura never reached the grave of her son with the flowers she had apparently gathered for it, and in a few months she died in an asylum. The headstone carved out of the marble top of a washstand by young Aaron for his father's grave is still in the Cabin. He has been in serious trouble ever since he left it there.*

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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How are you, brother?" The reply is: "So-so, Granman. How are you, brother?" The writer explains that "It does not do to claim that one is feeling too well, otherwise the enmity of the spirits might be incurred." From this it can be seen why there was a wide divergence between Lowman's words and his performance, and also why our older Negroes always appear to enjoy poor health.

Another tradition caused me to be embarrassed for the poor preacher, who seemed to have a strange affliction. I furtively looked around to see how the younger members of the congregation were taking the curious performance. Their matter-of-course attitude should have made me less innocent. However, it was not until I heard other preachers give the same effect—the mewing of a harassed cat combined with the bark of a half-strangled dog—that I realized my ludicrous mistake. At the peak of the preacher's harangue the words pour out so fast that he has no time to get his breath, and his gasping efforts cause the outrageous sounds that appear to have no name with us, but which are described by Martha Beckwith, in *Black Roadways*, under the name of "trooping." [2] She believes that the exercise "if persisted in, will produce that semiconscious condition so favorable to the communication of spirits." But it has always seemed to me that religious ecstasy is itself the source of the strange manifestation. When the preacher has reached his rhythmical best; when an insistent tapping of toes on the floor provides an under-current of sound along with a feeling of uncanny suspense; when the "moaning" (as the peculiarly beautiful humming of the Negroes is called) takes on an elemental quality that comes from everywhere and from nowhere in particular—then the snapping point is reached for someone, and you hear a piercing shriek. A woman stands up with stark, stiff arms stretched high above her head. If she makes much of a commotion she is supported into the open air to recover. When I was a little child I saw a woman who had gone into this rigid state carried to a pump beside the church, where, under the spout, she was quickly brought to her senses. In the House of Prayer in Savannah (where the pillars are thickly padded, and the sawdust is inches deep on the floor) I saw a "lone shouter" fall into a trance that lasted half

[2] *It is possible that the tradition was carried to Jamaica by Elder George Lisle, the former slave of Mr. Sharp, a loyalist of Savannah, who gave him his liberty. Lisle preached in Georgia during the Revolution. At the close of the war he went to Jamaica. Though an ex-slave, he organized, in Kingston in 1784, the first Baptist church on the island, and became "the chief human factor in the salvation of Jamaica." (L. G. Jordan, Negro Baptist History in the United States.)*